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ABSTRACT

This study is designed to determine if there are significant differences among "talkaholic" groups in rating reticence variables, in rating Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA) variables, and in rating Willingness to Talk in Class variables, as well as to determine if there are significant differences among Willingness to Talk in Class groups in rating reticence variables and PRCA variables. Results indicate that the high talkaholic group rated all reticence variables and all PRCA variables significantly lower than the low talkaholic group, as well as rating several Willingness to Talk Variables significantly higher than the low talkaholic group. The Willingness to Talk groups and the correlational analyses are reported and discussed in the paper. (Contains 17 references and 9 tables of data.) (Author/RS)

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ED 439 471

# "An Investigation of High School Students' Perceptions of Talkativeness, Apprehension, and Willingness to Talk Variables"

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ABSTRACT:

This study is designed to determine if there are significant differences among talkaholic groups in rating reticence variables, in rating PRCA variables, and in rating Willingness to Talk in Class variables, as well as to determine if there are significant differences among Willingness to Talk in Class groups in rating reticence variables and PRCA variables. Results indicate that the high talkaholic group rated all reticence variables and all PRCA variables significantly lower than low talkaholic group, as well as rating several Willingness to Talk Variables significantly higher than the low talkaholic group. The Willingness to Talk groups and the correlational analyses are reported and discussed in the paper.

For the past half-century research on the communication behavior of college students has been completed in the fields of communication and psychology. Much research has been completed on the impact of talkativeness on interpersonal perceptions such as source credibility, leadership ability, interpersonal attraction, powerfulness, and attitude similarity (Allgeier, 1974; Daly, McCroskey, and Richmond , 1977). After surveying much of the literature, McCroskey and Richmond (1993) concluded that the more a person talks, the more the person is perceived to be credible and to be a leader. Bostrom and Harrington (1999) concluded that talkers were more argumentative, less apprehensive, and had more positive attitudes about communication. They also concluded that "talkative" persons may well be as much of a communication problem as the reticence one.

Over the past 30 years the reticence construct has undergone an evolution. Initially, Phillips (1965) coined the term "reticent" to refer to the notion that there are people who have difficulty communicating across a range of situations. He defined reticence as a "personality-based, anxiety disorder." In 1977 Phillips shifted the definition to include it as a problem of inadequate communication skills. Later Phillips (1984) indicated: "When people avoid communication because they believe they will lose more by talking than by remaining silent, we refer to it as reticence." The most recent work (Phillips 1991; Kelly, Phillips, and Keaten, 1995) delineates the nature of these skills deficiencies.

The reticence construct assumes the skills deficiencies defining the problem correspond to the rhetorical canons of invention, disposition, style, delivery, and memory. The significance of the construct is made apparent by the subsequent development of cognate concept of communication apprehension (McCroskey, 1970 and 1984), unwillingness to communicate (Burgoon, 1976). and conversational skills (Spitzberg and Hunt, 1987). Based on a review of Phillips'

research, Keaten, Kelly, and Finch (1997) developed the reticence scale. The investigators generated items focusing on the social conversation context, which McCroskey (1984) termed a generalized context measure. The rationale for referring to the social conversation that those who have trouble in this context usually have difficulty in other contexts. The authors generated four items for six areas: anxiety, knowledge, timing, organization, delivery and memory. Phillips suggested that reticent people may not have serious skills deficiencies, but their behavior may not be competent simply because of their belief that they can not speak well. Keaton, Kelly, and Finch (1997). decided to include items about nervousness and anxiety. McCroskey (1984) noted a rational person with unsatisfactory communication skills ordinarily will experience communication apprehension. Numerous studies by McCroskey (1970; 1984) described CA as "an individuals level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons."

Specifically, the Keaten, Kelly, and Finch study (1997) was designed to test the following hypotheses:

1. The Reticence Scale is moderately and positively related to the PRCA-24
2. The Reticence Scale is moderately and negatively related to Conversational Skills Rating Scale (CSRS);
3. The Reticence Scale is moderately and negatively related to the Willingness to Communicate (WTC).

The results indicate that there were significant, moderate, positive correlations between the Reticence Scale variable scores and the PRCA -24 variable scores, except public discussion which obtained a low correlation. Moreover, moderate negative relationships existed between the Reticence Scale and both the

Conversational Skills Rating Scale and Willingness to Communicate. Overall, the relationships accounted for less than 50 percent of the variance.

In another study, Menzel and Carrell (1999) focused on instructors and students nonverbal and verbal immediacy to talk in class. Participants were asked how often they would be willing to participate in class under several specific conditions. Male students concluded that they learned more from male instructors and female students indicated that they learned more from female instructors.

In this study the researcher wants to determine if talkative high school students are more willing to talk in class than reticent and apprehensive students. Specifically, this study is designed to determine if there are significant differences among talkaholic groups in rating reticence variables, in rating PRCA variables, and in rating Willingness to Talk in Class variables, as well as to determine if there are significant differences among Willingness to Talk in Class groups in rating reticence variables and PRCA variable.

This study will examine the relationship l) between talkaholic scores and reticence variable scores, apprehension variable scores, and willingness to talk in class variable scores, among reticence variable scores, apprehension variable scores, and willingness to talk variable scores of high school students.

The specific research questions are?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Will there be significant differences ($p < 05$) among talkaholic groups in rating Reticence Scale variables (anxiety, knowledge, timing, organization, delivery, and memory)?

2. Will there be significant differences ( p < >05) among talkaholic groups in rating PRCA variables (group, meeting, interpersonal and public discussion)?

3. Will there be significant differences ( p > .05) among talkaholic groups in rating Willingness to Talk in Class variables ( High Talk Time, Medium Talk Time, Low Talk Time and Total Talk Time)?

4. Will there be significant differences (p < .05) among Willingness to Talk in Class groups (high, medium, and low) in rating reticence variable scores (anxiety, knowledge, timing, organization, delivery, and memory)?

5. Will there be significant differences ( p > .05) among Willingness to Talk in Class groups (high, medium , and low) in rating PRCA variable scores (group, meeting, interpersonal and public discussion?

6. What are the relationships between talkaholic scores and reticence variable scores?

7. What are the relationships among reticence variable scores?

8. What are the relationships between talkaholic scores and communication apprehension variables?

9. What are the relationships among communications apprehension scores?

10. What are the relationships between talkaholic scores and Willingness to Talk in Class variable scores?

11. What are the relationships among Willingness to Talk in Class variable scores?

## METHODS

### Subjects

Participants were 93 students (54 female (57%) and 39 males (43%)., consisting of four intact small group communication classes at large midwestern high school. The instruments were completed during the first week of spring semester 1999. Students were told that educators wanted to know how they felt about communication. The anonymity of the students was guaranteed.

### Instruments

a. Talkaholic

The first characteristic of talkaholic's behavior is compulsiveness, while the second characteristic of the talkaholic is self-awareness. That is, this person is aware that her/his talking behavior is seen as excessive by others. The third characteristic of the talkaholic is the manifestation of behavior that is not above the norm, but is highly deviant. The final characteristic of the talkaholic is that she/he will continue to communicate even though she/he knows it is not in her/his best interest.

The development of the Talkaholic Scale by McCroskey and Richmond (1993) was based on the characteristics described above. A total of 25-items were generated. The measure was completed by 816 college students on the first day of class in basic courses in communication studies. Students were asked to rate each item on a 1 to 5 scale: (1) strongly agree that it applies, (2) agree that it applies, (3) are undecided, (2) disagrees that it applies, or (1) strongly disagree that it applies. Students were instructed that there were no right or wrong answers. The data were submitted to iterated principal components factor analysis with oblique (varimax) rotation. Ten items with their loading on the

first factor were selected to become the focal items of the Talkaholic Scale. Test-retest reliability is .76.

In this study students were categories into high moderate, and low talkaholic groups. Students scoring one standard deviation above the mean were classified in the high talkaholic group, while students scoring one standard deviation below the mean were classified in the low talkaholic group; students whose scores were between one standard deviation above the mean and one standard deviation below the mean were classified in moderate talkaholic group.

b. Reticence

Kelly, Keaten, and Begnal (l994) develop the reticence Skill which focuses on how individuals assess their feelings and skills in social settings. It consists of six dimensions: (l) feelings and anxiety, (2) knowledge of communication topics, (3) timing skills, (4) organization of thoughts, (5) delivery skills, and (6) memory skills. Participants used a 6-point likert scale to measure to rate their level of agreement with each statement. Scores for each dimension range from 1 to 21. The total score range from 6 to l26. The overall reliability of the total scale was .95. with the six dimensions reliability coefficients ranging from .82 to 92.

c. Personal Report of Communication Apprehension

The PRCA-24 instrument consists of four separate contexts: interpersonal/dyadic, public speaking, group communication, and meetings (McCroskey, l984). There are six items for each communication context. The instrument has strong face validity and empirical validity. Factor analysis was used to confirm expected dimensionality rather than to define dimensionality. The internal consistency was a coefficient of .92.

d. Willingness to Talk in Class Scale

The Willingness to Talk in Class scale was modeled after the "Willingness to Communicate" scale developed by McCroskey (1986). The survey questions were developed through interviews with college students. The final instruments consisted of 19 questions asking how often a student would be willing to participate in class under each of several specific conditions. For example, the questions focused on the following: interest in class or topic and motivation. Specifically the survey was scored on a likert type scale, anchored by 0 being "never" and 4 being "very often". In contrast to the Menzel and Carrell (1999), in this study high school students were asked to rate the items based on how they generally act in a classroom setting. Cronbach's alpha for the entire class was .92.

Students were categories into three Willingness to Talk groups based on thier total scores. Students scores one standard deviation above the mean were classified as high talk group, while students who scored one standard deviation below the mean were classified into the low Willingness to Talk group. Those students whose scores fell between one standard deviation above or below the mean were classified in the middle group.

Statistics

One-way analysis were completed to determine differences among Talkaholic groups (high, medium and low) on all dependent measures. Likewise one-way analyses of variance were completed to determine differences among Willingness to Talk in Class group (high, medium, and low) and dependent measures. If significant differences occurred among groups ($p < .05$) the Scheffe procedure was used to determine between group differences. Oblique factor analysis was completed on Willingness to Talk scores to discover if different factors emerged.

Correlation analyses were completed to determine relationships among all variables. Canonical correlations were completed to determine differences between sets of variables.

## RESULTS

The mean results are reported in Table 1. Overall females had significantly higher talkaholic scores and males had significantly higher public discussion scores ($p < .05$). The composite means are presented for each variable as no other significant differences occurred between gender groups on dependent measures. Significant differences occurred among talkaholic group in rating all reticence variables ( $p < .01$). The Scheffe results, reported in Table 2, reveal there are significant differences between high and low talkaholic groups on all reticence variable ($p < .05$), while significant differences occurred between the moderate and low groups on anxiety and delivery variables ($p < .05$). Significant differences also occurred between the low and high talkaholic groups in rating all PRCA-24 variables (see Table 3)

Factor analysis was completed to determine if factors would emerge for the Willingness to Talk in Class scale. Three factors, as shown in Table 4, emerged which accounted for 63 percent of the variance. The factors were labeled "high talk t"\me," "moderate talk time" and "low talk time." Significant differences occurred among Talkaholic groups in rating all three factors. The Scheffe results, reported in Table 5, indicate that significant differences occurred between low and high Talkaholic groups in rating "high talk time' and "total talk time" ($p < .05$), but no significant differences occurred between groups in rating moderate talk time and low talk time variables. In addition significant

differences occurred between high and low willingness to talk groups on PRCA-Group and PRCA-meeting variables.

In addition the relationships between talkaholic scores and reticence variable scores, between talkaholic scores and PRCA variable scores and between talkaholic scores and Willingness to Talk in Class scores are reported in Tables 7 through Table 9. The results indicate that significant differences occurred between talkaholic scores and anxiety, knowledge, and delivery ($p < .01$). Significant differences occurred among all reticence variables ($p < .001$). Significant relationship exist between talkaholic scores and all PRCA variables ($p < 02$), while significant relationships exist between talkaholic scores and high talk time scores and total talk time scores ($p < .01$). Significant relationship exist among all Willingness to Talk variable scores.

## DISCUSSION

An interpretation of the results indicate that females have significantly higher talkaholic scores and males have significantly higher public discussion scores. These results support previous research by McCroskey and Richmond (1993) and McDowell (1998). There, however, were no significant differences between gender groups on the other variables. Gender is not a good discriminating variable as there is much within group variance and limited between group variance.

The high talkaholic group rated all reticence variable significant higher than low talkaholic group. These results show that talkative students perceive that they are less reticent than other talkaholic groups. These finding seem to support Phillips (1984) assertion that reticent people "avoid communication

because they believe that they will lose more by talking than by remaining silent. In addition the differences between the high and moderate talkaholic group reinforces the premise that the more talkative a person is the less reticent. Likewise, high talkaholic were less apprehensive than low talkaholic. That is high talkaholic do not avoid communication and do not have fear and anxiety about communication.

The factor analysis results reveal that there were three factors for the Willingness to Talk in Class instrument. They were labeled High Talk Time. Low Talk Time and Moderate Talk Time. Overall, high talkaholic talked more frequently for all factors and talk significantly more frequently on both the High Talk and Total Talk items. These findings seem to suggest that compulsive talkers talk more when the class in engaged in open discussion, when prepared for class, when graded for participation and when they dislike their classmates. In addition, they talk when no one else is talking, when they are sitting in front of the class or when they are setting in back of the class. These finding support both McCroskey and Richmond (1993) study and McDowell and McDowell (1998) study. That is talkaholics talk regardless of the situation and they are aware of their behaviors. For example, only subjects operationally defined as high talkaholics indicated that they would often or very often talk in the following situations:

> When I dislike my classmates.
> When an assignment is being discussed.

The Scheffe results, reported in Table 6, indicate that respondents with high Willingness to Talk scores have lower PRCA group and meeting apprehension scores and low anxiety and delivery scores. This again reinforces

the notion that students who are the most active in classroom discussion are least likely to experience apprehension and reticence.

The correlational analyses points out the high negative relationship between talkativeness and reticence variables, between talkativeness and PRCA variables, and between talkativeness and willingness to talk in class variables. Likewise, High positive correlations exist among reticence variables, among apprehension variables, and among willingness to talk in class variables.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that high talkaholics experience less reticence and less apprehension than other talkaholic groups.

Future research should be completed with a larger group of subjects at the junior high, senior high and college level. Research might also be done with elementary students and with adult groups.

Other research might focus on the actual comments of talkaholic group in various situations. For example, in an experimental study subjects could be identified as high talkaholic, moderate talkaholic, and low talkaholics. Groups could be formed which would contain only high talkaholics, only moderate talkaholics and only low talkaholics, while other groups would have mixed talkaholics. Several questions could be generated:

Will subjects who are classified as high talkaholics talk more than subjects classified as moderate or low talkaholics?

a. What types of comments will high talkaholics use?

b. What types of comments will moderate or low talkaholics use?

Regular classroom discussion groups could be asked to discuss timely topics. The researcher could identify what types of comments different

talkaholic groups would make during a discussion. Trained coders could identify the types of comments and how the comments could be linked to the Willingness to Talk in Class Scale. Students could be asked to rate this scale as well as the Reticence Scale and the PRCA-Group items immediately after the discussion.

Other research could be completed at the high school level to identify reticent students. The scale could be used to identify students level of reticence in the following areas: invention, disposition, style, delivery and memory. The Penn State Reticence Program could be followed to assess it effectiveness at the high school level. Previous research by Keaton, Kelly. and Finch (1997) concluded that the Reticence Program is effective at the college level, but research needs to be done at the high school level.

Overall this study has investigated high school students in terms of their talkativeness, reticence, apprehension and willingness to talk in class. The results suggest that high talkaholics experience less reticence, less communication apprehension and are more willing to talk in class. The results of these self-report measures add to an understanding of high school perceptions of their communication behavior. More research is need to discover if their perceptions are accurate in various communication situations.

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Table 1
Mean Results for Talkaholic Scores, Reticence Variable Scores. PRCA-24 Variable Scores, and Willingness to Talk in Class Variable Scores

| Variables | Means |
|---|---|
| Talkaholic | |
| Male | 45.15 |
| Female | 58.27 |
| Reticence | |
| Anxiety | 13.9 |
| Knowledge | 12.3 |
| Timing | 13.65 |
| Organization | 12.9 |
| Delivery | 13.1 |
| Memory | 12.9 |
| PRCA-24 | |
| Group | 12.68 |
| Meeting | 14.16 |
| Conversation | 15.05 |
| Public Speaking | 22.44 |
| Willingness to Talk in Class | |
| High Talk Time | 12.4 |
| Medium Talk Time | 7.52 |
| Low Talk Time | 6.68 |
| Total Talk Time | 48.1 |

Table 2
Scheffe Results between Talkaholic Groups
and Reticence Variables

| Variables | Levels | P | F |
|---|---|---|---|
| Anxiety | Low vs. Moderate | 3.97 | .05 |
| | Low vs. High | 5.38 | .05 |
| Knowledge | Low vs. high | 4.32 | .05 |
| Timing | Low vs. High | 6.29 | .05 |
| Organization | Low vs. High | 4.73 | .05 |
| Delivery | Lo vs. Moderate | 3.99 | .05 |
| | Low vs. High | 5.45 | .05 |
| Memory | Low vs. High | 4.67 | .05 |

Table 3
Scheffe Results between Talkholic Groups
on PRCA Variables

| Variables | Levels | F | P |
|---|---|---|---|
| PRCA--Group | Low vs. High | 4.61 | .05 |
| PRCA-Meeting | Low vs High | 6.44 | .05 |
| PRCA-Conversation | Low vs High | 3.97 | .05 |
| PRCA-Public Speaking | Low vs. High | 8.31 | .01 |

Table 4

Oblique Factor Analysis on Willingness to Talk in Class Scale

| Factors | Items | Loading |
|---|---|---|
| High Talk Time | When the class is engaged in an open discussion. | .64 |
| | When I am prepared for class. | .42 |
| | When I am graded on participation. | .70 |
| | When I am comfortable with the subject matter. | .42 |
| | When I dislike my classmates. | .68 |
| | When everyone is talking. | .66 |
| Low Talk Time | When no one else is talking. | .70 |
| | When I am sitting in front of the class. | .55 |
| | When my views differ from my classmates' views. | . 53 |
| Moderate Talk Time | When the class is engaged in a heated debate. | .70 |
| | When I am angry about a topic. | .75 |

Factor 1 accounts for 37 percent of the variance
Factor 2 accounts for 17 percent of the variance
Factor 3 accounts for 9 percent of the variance

Table 5
Scheffe Results between Talkaholic Groups
Willingness to Talk in Class Variables

| Variables | Levels | P | F |
|---|---|---|---|
| High Talk Time | Low vs. High | 3.217 | .05 |
| Total Talk Time | Low vs. Moderate | 3.429 | .05 |
| | Low vs. High | 5.735 | .01 |

Table 6
Scheffe Results between Willingness to Talk Groups
PRCA Variables and Reticence variables

| Variables | Levels | F | P |
|---|---|---|---|
| PRCA-Group | Low vs. High | 4.245 | .05 |
| | Moderate vs. High | 3.579 | .05 |
| PRCA-Meeting | Low Vs. High | 3.950 | .05 |
| Anxiety | Low vs. High | 4. 427 | .05 |
| Delivery | Low vs. high | 4.729 | .05 |

Table 7
Relationships among Talkaholic scores and
Reticence Variable

| | Vatiables | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Talk Ax | Kn | Tm | Org. | Del | Mem |
| Talk -.42 | -.32 | -.26 | -.14 | -.41 | -.09 |
| Ax | .86 | .84 | .87 | .88 | .89 |
| Kn | | .76 | .81 | .81 | .81 |
| TM | | | .87 | .87 | .85 |
| Org | | | | .91 | .88 |
| Del | | | | | .93 |
| Mem | | | | | |

.34 = p < .001 21= p < .05
.27 = p < .01
.24 = p < .02

Table 8
Relationships among Talkaholic and PRCA Variables

| | Talk. | Gp | Meet | Conv | P. S. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Talk | | -.27 | -.35 | -.23 | .35 |
| GP. | | | .58 | .39 | .03 |
| Meet. | | | | .47 | -.09 |
| Conver. | | | | | -.25 |
| P.S. | | | | | |

Same p values as above

Table 9
Relationships among Talkoholic variables and Willingness to Talk in Class Variables

| | Variables | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Talk | HTT | LTT | MTT | TTT |
| Talk | .29 | .04 | .11 | .16 |
| HTT | | .47 | .73 | .79 |
| LTT | | | .50 | .75 |
| MTT | | | | .76 |
| TTT | | | | |

Talk=Talkoholic
HTT= High Talk Time
LTT=Low Talk Time
MTT=Moderate Talk Timer
TTT= Total Talk Time

.34= $p < .001$
.27= $p < .01$
.24= $p < .02$
.20= $p < .05$